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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses enrollment projections and trends in public and private colleges and universities. (1) Total enrollment in higher education may reach 14 million by 1982 and 12 million of these will be in public institutions, almost a 100 percent increase since 1970. Enrollments in private institutions will probably increase by only 5 percent. (2) The trend toward enrollment in public institutions has accelerated from 50 percent in 1950 to 75 percent in 1970. (3) The peak number of college age youth will reach the campuses in the early 1980's. The numbers will drop after 1982. More than 85 percent of these students will be in public institutions. (4) With the increasing trend toward public higher education, private institutions are facing grave financial problems and will have to receive public assistance either directly or indirectly if they are to continue to function. (5) In both public and private institutions students will probably be asked to assume more of the financial burden by using deferred payment plans. (AF)

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PROJECTIONS OF ENROLLMENTS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

R. B. Thompson

1. The projection of enrollments in higher education is vital to all of us who are related in any way to this unique phenomenon in the United States. We have attempted to make higher education available to all who will take advantage of the opportunity and as a consequence now more than two-thirds of all our high school graduates continue on into college. Taxpayers, parents, alumni, philanthropists, the Federal and State governments, and the students themselves are asking how much higher education we can afford.
2. Higher education in the United States is at a critical crossroads. Never in history has the shift from private to public higher education been so dramatic. From 1960 to 1970 enrollments in publicly assisted colleges and universities in the fifty states, plus the District of Columbia, increased from 2,041,871 to 6,378,656, an increase of 212 percent. During the same period of time, enrollments in the private colleges and universities increased from 1,527,190 to 2,111,398, an increase of only 38 percent.
3. Following these trends and based upon the numbers of children already born, we may expect total college and university enrollments to reach almost 14 million by the year 1982, just twelve years from now. Public institutions of higher education with a little over 6 million students now enrolled will be called upon to accommodate that many more, an increase of almost 100 percent. On the other hand, private higher educational institutions now enrolling around 2,000,000 will increase their enrollments by not more than 5 percent.

ACCELERATING ENROLLMENT CHANGES

In 1951, slightly less than 50 percent of the enrollments in our colleges and universities were in those institutions which were publicly assisted. By the fall of 1960, this percentage had shifted to 57.2 percent and by the fall of 1970, to 75.1 percent. Obviously, unless forces are brought to bear to change this trend dramatically, soon 85 to 90 percent of our students will be attending

HE 002 369

publicly assisted colleges and universities. A straight-line projection of the trends during the past ten years would mean that private higher education would soon disappear from the American scene. Is this what we want? Shall we permit private colleges to close because of lack of funds? To what extent should public funds be used to support higher education? Since the students themselves obviously profit by higher education, will the public ask that these students assume an increasing share of the cost of their own education?

PEAK ENROLLMENTS YET TO COME

4. Many persons have become lulled by the fact that the actual number of births has declined in recent years, but these persons forget that the peak number of births occurred in 1957, declining only slightly during the next three or four years, which means that the peak number of freshmen will not reach the colleges and universities until 1975 bringing maximum attendance in about 1980 to 1982. In fact, by 1975, we may expect more than 2,900,000 <u>freshmen</u> to be enrolled in our colleges and universities, approximately the total number of <u>all</u> students enrolled in these colleges and universities just thirteen years ago. It is noted also that the percentage of high school graduates going on to college has increased approximately 23 percent in the past nineteen years rising from 43 percent in 1950 to 66 percent in 1969. It should, however, be kept firmly in mind that the peak number of college-age youth, and we are assuming the consequent peak college and university enrollments will reach our campuses about 1980 or 1982.
5. It is true that the actual number of births has dropped 17 percent from 1957 to 1969 and consequently even with an increasing percentage of high school graduates going on to college, total attendance in our colleges and universities seems certain to drop after 1980 or 1982.

6. As indicated previously, it is assumed that the public colleges and universities will account for practically all the increasing enrollments in the years ahead. During the past two years, the number of students enrolled in all private colleges and universities in the United States dropped slightly each year. Based on the trends in each state for the past ten years, we projected a total increase of about 30,000 in all private colleges and universities this year and with an enrollment of over 2,000,000 missed the actual enrollment by some 10,000. The public colleges and universities, on the other hand, this year increased more than one-half million. Following these established trends, then, we may expect our public institutions of higher education to double their enrollment in the next twelve years. These increases may, of course, not all be on the existing campuses.

7. Looking ahead, it is interesting to note what will happen in each state by 1987. If the pattern already established is followed, Oregon and Mississippi will join Wyoming where already all the students attend the publicly assisted institutions of higher education. In the United States it will mean that more than 85 percent of all students will be attending public colleges and universities.

8. Illustrative and indicative of the shifting from private to public higher education is the trend in Ohio. In 1945, there were only five state-assisted higher educational institutions in Ohio: The Ohio State University, Ohio University, Miami University, Bowling Green State University, and Kent State University with a total enrollment of 36,000. At the time some sixty private colleges and universities were serving the needs of approximately one-half the students in Ohio.

9. Now six additional universities have been built, one separate medical college, four community colleges, one state college, fourteen technical institutes, and thirty-one branch campuses for a total of sixty-two state assisted institutions of higher education having been established in Ohio. Enrollments in these colleges

and universities now total more than 275,000, almost eight times the number just twenty-six years ago. It is being proposed that the states assume even a greater burden by assisting private institutions. Recently in Ohio seventeen financially hard-up small colleges asked the state to consider taking them over to be run as public institutions.

10. There is another factor which should be considered by public and private institutions alike. Trade unions and other groups representing the unskilled and the skilled workers are increasingly successful in making demands for added pay. The gap between pay scales for the highly educated and relatively uneducated continues to narrow. A college education may soon be considered to have less value than is now the case. Educational planners must be alert to the social and economic trends which will in turn influence enrollments in higher education. High school graduates may be convinced that at least on a short-term basis they may profit more by joining a trade union than going to college.

11. If the shift in enrollments from private to public higher educational institutions continues, this situation will create critical problems for both types of colleges and universities. Many private colleges already have empty dormitory rooms, other physical facilities which could accommodate more students, too many faculty members for the size of the student body, and budgets completely inadequate for their needs. On the other hand, public universities have grown too large and size itself is a major contributing factor to campus unrest and other problems. If we are to avoid a progressive aggravation of this situation, we must reverse the trends established over the past two decades. We could, of course, simply admit that private higher education no longer has a place in the American plan. Not many people are ready to accept this alternative.

In light of these trends it is strongly urged that private colleges and universities consider very carefully any plans for expansion or extension of programs now

being offered. Certainly these colleges and universities should not add significantly to their existing physical facilities unless there is urgent need and unless funds are on hand or definitely assured. Even then, it may be found that the colleges will be over-built by the mid 1980's when enrollments seem certain to drop. The past ten years have seen public enrollments more than triple while private enrollments have increased very slightly.

12. Parochial, elementary and secondary schools, and private colleges are experiencing increasing difficulty in meeting operational costs and support for capital outlay. Inflation and taxes curtail income from both endowments and gifts from private and corporate sources. As more and more public funds are made available through the publicly assisted schools and colleges, it becomes harder and harder to meet the competition to provide quality education in the private schools and colleges. The picture is further complicated by the fact that increasingly public institutions are turning to the private sector for supplementary assistance in the form of gifts and endowments, and the private schools and colleges are asking for public support to make it possible even to continue to operate at all.

It is readily admitted that the United States had established a system of elementary, secondary, and higher education which provides opportunities unequaled anywhere in the world. Shall we and should we continue to expand and extend this plan? It should be kept clearly in mind that there are no inexhaustible sources of funds. Quality higher education is expensive and the only unanswered question is "Who will pay the cost?" Fundamentally, people will tax themselves more than they will give voluntarily. Furthermore, it seems perfectly obvious that if we are to continue our high-quality private colleges and universities, these institutions must receive public assistance directly or indirectly.

13. One plan which has been suggested is a tuition equalization plan whereby the student would pay the same amount whether he attended a private or public college

or university and the state would pay the difference in tuition. Another proposal is that the state give assistance to private institutions by providing for capital improvements. Still another proposal calls for direct financial aid to private institutions. The private colleges and universities can do much to help themselves by careful planning and the elimination of non-essential specialized programs and small classes. The trend seems to point toward the assumption of more responsibility by the students. Both private and public universities are suggesting plans for deferred payments by students.

14. There are many educational alternatives as we face the problems immediately ahead in higher education. Undoubtedly there will have to be more financial support. We can use our facilities better, but this will take careful planning and will limit the flexibility to which we have become accustomed. New teaching methods are being proposed and tried. Multi-media approaches are being proposed with emphasis on television presentations. It is suggested also that at the other end of Sesame Street stands the open university with no resident students and a whole new curriculum. We are being challenged to make higher education for adults as exciting as Sesame Street is for children. Television, radio, correspondence study, films, tapes, programmed instruction, museums, counseling centers and short-term seminars are recommended as the media and means for instruction. An eventual University of America is being advocated which will encompass courses dealing with the environmental arts, the mass media, law, education, religion, international affairs, science, public policy, the history of great ideas, and the lives of great men. There is increasing emphasis on technical education with the establishment of technical institutes and the suggestion that credits earned in these schools be transferred and applicable toward the baccalaureate degree. There is general consensus that enrollment limits should be set for our large comprehensive universities. Many plans are

being offered to remove the socio-economic barriers to higher education for a large portion of our population. Major concerns are directed toward the continued utilization of our private colleges. It is agreed that these colleges fill a real need and should be assisted in their efforts to provide higher education to hundreds of thousands of our youth. We are not yet agreed upon how this should be done.

15. Many questions then remain. Will we be able to continue to provide higher education for all those who desire it? Who will provide? After an individual completes his or her formal education and receives a degree, who profits by this education and, consequently, who should have paid for it? Will we find it necessary to deny higher education to many who desire it? The governor in Ohio is proposing that each individual repay the state that subsidy which the state provides for higher education. Is this idea compatible with the concept of state responsibility for education?

16. Ultimately these decisions are in your hands. What will be your answers? Among all the interested parties the general taxable public, both state and federal, alumni, parents, faculty, administrators, and students, who should make these decisions? Regardless of the final plan adopted, every effort should be made to maintain our system of high quality education thus far established, furthermore, collectively, we should be able to determine how the cost of higher education should be borne so that this cost will be commensurate with benefits received.